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A Resource Guide for Establishing School Councils
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Working Document



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### Introduction



"The school councils' primary role is to develop powerful partnerships between schools, families, and their communities, by mobilizing resources, actions, and accountability, with the goal of improved education for all children."

Michael Fullan, University of Toronto, 1995

A school council is an advisory group of elected parents, educators, and students, and appointed community members. As of June 1996, all elementary and secondary public schools are expected to have school councils in place.

In Policy/Program Memorandum 122, the Ministry of Education and Training has outlined minimum requirements which boards will follow in designing their policies and procedures. School board policies may exceed these requirements.

This working document will assist boards\* in developing their policies and procedures. It also provides suggestions for the implementation of the new councils, and strategies for reaching out to communities.

A school council handbook, to be published in the spring of 1996, will contain training modules to prepare the new council members for their work. Modules will include:

- 1. Getting the school council started
  - · the first meeting
  - roles, responsibilities, operating structures
- 2. Developing the school council
  - running effective meetings
  - strategies for developing consensus
  - · team-building
  - conflict resolution
  - strategies for shared decision-making
- 3. Focusing on needs and issues
  - understanding our school's needs
  - understanding our community
  - reaching out to our community
- 4. Linking to school-based plans
  - assessing our school
  - setting priorities
  - planning for growth
  - measuring our success
- 5. Sustaining the school council
  - planning for orientation and replacement of members

The handbook will be revised to reflect the lessons we learn as school councils are established throughout the province. We will build on our experiences as we go, to promote strong and effective partnerships for learning.

<sup>\*</sup> For the purposes of this document, "school boards" refers also to minority-language sections in the context of the policy components that fall within the exclusive jurisdiction of the sections.

### 1. Partners for Learning



"By improving the number, types, and levels of interaction, by improving the communication between school and community, and by utilizing community resources, it is suggested that schools may become more effective in the future."

Theodore C. Wagenaar

### Introduction

To meet the needs of the present and the challenges of the future, the Royal Commission on Learning, in its report entitled *For the Love of Learning* (1994, released in January 1995), recommended a more consistent and developed system of school and community linkages. The school lies at the very heart of every community and is the only common resource that exists in practically every neighbourhood across the province. Within the publicly funded school system in Ontario, there are many rich traditions and experiences in community involvement. These traditions, including the unique experiences and perspectives of the Catholic and French educational communities, can be built upon as foundations for further community participation in education. The introduction of school councils in Ontario is yet another opportunity to involve students, parents, and communities in co-operative and effective alliances with their schools.

### **Learning from the experience of others**

School councils have been or are being set up in most other provinces and territories in Canada, and in other countries. Research shows that, where the councils have been effective, they have had:

- a focus on student learning
- a link to the school's priorities for growth and improvement
- an emphasis on promoting meaningful parental and community involvement
- the collaborative leadership of the school principals
- good processes for decision-making
- clear roles and responsibilities
- training for school principals
- training for other council members
- effective outreach strategies to achieve a wider range of involvement
- knowledge of strategies for change

Studies of effective schools have shown that involving parents directly in the education of their children improves learning and strengthens the partnership between families and schools. This partnership is further enhanced by the participation of other community members, agencies, and organizations reaching towards a common goal: meeting the needs of today's children.

# 2. The School Council

### Role of the school council

The advisory role of the school council will be to provide ideas and opinions to assist the principal and, where appropriate, school board trustees in their decision-making on educational issues. The advice should be based on the general views of the school community, and the best interests of students throughout the school. School councils must operate within the Ministry of Education and Training and board policies and procedures.

### Responsibilities

The school councils will deal with issues of particular relevance to their communities, and establish their priorities on an annual basis. Provincial policy will require that school board policy direct the school principal, and, where relevant, senior staff and trustees of the board, to seek advice from the school council in the following general areas:

- · the local school year calendar
- the school code of behaviour
- school program goals and priorities and curriculum delivery
- the responses of the school or school board to achievement in provincial and board assessment programs
- school budget priorities
- · criteria for the selection of principals
- methods of reporting to parents and the community
- · extracurricular activities in the school
- school-based services and community partnerships related to social, health, recreational, and nutritional programs
- community use of school facilities
- · local co-ordination of services for children and youth
- development, implementation, and review of board policies at the local level

As well, the school council will provide input to the school profile, which describes the different groups represented in the school population and the neighbourhood and may also profile details about the school's activities and educational priorities.



"Schools must become part of a network of many local or regional organizations, all interconnected, and all dealing with the whole reality of childhood."

Royal Commission on Learning, For the Love of Learning

### Membership

The membership of the councils should reflect the diversity of the school communities, and their different histories, traditions, and heritages. Parents and guardians will form the majority of the council, except in adult day schools, where "parent" positions will be held by students. Trustees and teachers may be elected as parent members of the council in the school their children attend.

The term of office for elected and appointed positions will be one or two years, as determined by school board policy, but both elected and appointed members may seek additional terms of office.

School board policies must ensure that members of a school council include:

- · parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school
- community representatives
- a student (this is mandatory in secondary schools in elementary schools, it is at the discretion of the principal)
- · the school principal
- · a teacher
- · a non-teaching staff member

Catholic school boards may wish to have representation from the parishes within the school's attendance area.

Individual school board policies may exceed these requirements, but parents and guardians must form the majority of the school council.

Membership in the school council will be determined in the following ways:

- parents and guardians will be elected by the parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school
- the chair of the council will be a parent member and will be elected by the council
- the student representative will be elected by the students
- the teacher representative will be elected by the members of the teaching staff
- the non-teaching staff member will be elected by the members of the non-teaching staff
- the school principal is automatically a member
- the community members will be appointed by the council once it is established
- in Catholic boards, parish representatives for school councils may be appointed by the parishes within the school's attendance area

### **Elections and appointments**

Elections for the first school council must be held by June 1996. The school board is responsible for developing a board policy to deal with elections and appointments, and the principal is responsible for organizing the first election. Outreach and consultation with parents and the community are keys to the success of this process.

### **Appointment of community representatives**

The number of community representatives to be appointed by the other school council members may be outlined in the school board policy.

Elected school council members should identify the community representatives who will best serve the school. Community representatives may be business people, senior citizens, labour representatives, members of local religious or ethnocultural groups, or representatives of community support groups. Members of social service agencies and neighbourhood associations may also be considered.

### Roles and responsibilities of school council members

The chair of the school council shall:

- call council meetings
- prepare the agenda for the meetings
- chair the meetings
- ensure that the minutes of the meetings are recorded and maintained
- · participate in information and training programs
- communicate with the school principal
- ensure that there is regular communication with the school community
- consult with senior board staff and trustees, as required

The members of the school council shall:

- participate in council meetings
- participate in information and training programs
- · act as a link between the school council and the community
- encourage the participation of parents from all groups, and of other people within the school community

2. THE SCHOOL COUNCIL

The principal of the school shall:

- facilitate the establishment of the school council and assist in its operations
- support and promote the council's activities
- seek input from the council in areas for which it has been assigned advisory responsibility
- act as a resource on laws, regulations, board policies, and collective agreements
- encourage the participation of parents from all groups and of other people within the school community
- ensure that copies of the minutes of the council's meetings are kept at the school
- assist the council in communicating with the school community

### School councils and the local school board

Each school board is responsible for developing a procedure for responding to the advice of school councils. School boards are encouraged to facilitate communication among school councils. School boards, trustees, and principals will continue to exercise their duties and responsibilities as defined by the Education Act.

# 3. Getting Started



"It is important to recognize that the presence of parents in the school not only provides more adults to teach reading or offer help and support to children, but also transforms the culture of the school."

Suzanne Ziegler

### At the board level

Each school board must develop a policy to direct the implementation of school councils, based upon the requirements of the MET Policy/Program Memorandum 122 (PPM 122).

The following outline may help boards establish policy and procedures.

### Step One:

Establish an implementation committee with representation from all the partners

### Step Two: Develop a process for consultation with groups such as:

- school staff and administration
- existing parent groups and associations
- federations and unions
- members of the community
- school board trustees
- service agencies and community networks

### Step Three: Develop a board policy and procedures

The following may be considered when developing policy:

- the rationale and purpose of the council, as they relate to board goals and directions
- links to the research on meaningful parental involvement, and student learning

The following may be considered when developing board procedures:

### membership

- size and composition of council
- inclusive representation
- outreach strategies
- minimum numbers, elementary and secondary
- eligibility of board employees and trustees for election
- definition of parent/guardian, non-teaching staff, community representation

### election process

- process to appoint community members
- process for filling positions vacated during the term
- sample ballots and communication strategies

### term of office

• possible phase-in process to ensure that experienced council members can provide direction and advice to newly elected or appointed members



"The key to a high degree of involvement that is well integrated into the school and its activities appears to be the leadership both of school administrators and of concerned community residents."

"Parent involvement is a significant predictor: parents who are more involved in school, regardless of their own educational background, have children who perform better in school."

David L. Stevenson and David P. Baker

### role of school councils

- statement regarding the best interests of all students and the school community
- mechanism to provide input to the board
- process for input in the selection of school principals
- formats for bylaws and constitution
- limitations
- liability insurance for volunteers

### responsibility of school council members

- consensus as a preferred method to make decisions
- · attendance at meetings and strategy for dealing with non-attendance
- process for evaluation
- mechanism to deal with conflict of interest
- provisions for situations unique to the board or some of its schools

### role of chair as defined in PPM 122

- method of election
- training and support

### role of principal

• training and support

### role of board and trustees

- support and resources available to school councils
- conflict of interest
- mechanism to resolve conflicts

Appendix 2 contains further details on developing policy and procedures.

Appendices 3, 4, 5, and 6 are samples of policy statements, procedures, consultation models, and communication strategies. They may be helpful to boards as the policy and procedures are developed.

### Step Four: Develop an implementation plan that may include:

- communication strategies
- outreach
- training for principals and school councils
- resources
- evaluation

### At the school level

# Step One: Inform and involve staff and reach out to existing parent and community groups

It is important to discuss issues and concerns with staff and to build a common understanding of the purpose and value of parental and community involvement in our schools. Staff and parent and community groups should be made aware of Policy/Program Memorandum 122 to help them understand the role of the school council. A discussion of the relationship of current parent and community groups to the new school council would be helpful in planning for the future.

Some existing parent-teacher or school advisory groups may want to adapt so that they conform to the requirements set out in Policy/Program Memorandum 122. Others may want to continue their work independently of the new council. This decision should be made by the parents who have children attending the school, together with the principal. A chart in Appendix 7 will help groups compare what is specified by ministry policy with what is going on now at the school and board levels.

### Step Two: Establish a team

The principal may create a team consisting of current parent-group representatives, staff, parents, and community partners. This group would work with the principal to develop a transition plan for the establishment of the new school council, based upon Policy/Program Memorandum 122 and board policy and procedures. This could include plans for communication, outreach strategies, and elections.

# Step Three: Develop a plan and process for orienting the new school council

Training and resource modules will be developed by the Ministry of Education and Training for use by the principal and newly elected school council members.

### Suggested activities for getting started at the school level

During the school year 1995-1996, school boards will be preparing school council policies and procedures.

At the school level, principals are encouraged to continue to support the meaningful involvement of parents and community and to discuss the introduction of school councils. To assist with this task, a transition team representing staff, parents, and community could provide information, communicate with the school community, and plan for elections and for the first meeting of the council.

Several activities suggested in this section may help the transition team. The team may select and adapt activities to meet the needs of their community. An outline of the outcomes, possible participants, materials, and tasks is provided for each activity. Master worksheets for the activities can be found in Appendix 7, as can the article studied in Activity 4.

Many of the activities in this section are based on co-operative group learning strategies. This method engages all participants by having them work together, resulting in greater learning.

GETTING STARTED . MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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### **Overview of activities**

Activity	Outcomes	Possible Participants	Master Worksheets
1. Respecting the Past	<ul> <li>understanding of the current level of parental and community involvement</li> <li>recognition of the contribution of volunteers</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>parent group members</li> <li>parents</li> <li>community members</li> <li>staff</li> <li>transition team</li> </ul>	Meaningful Parental     Involvement     Celebrating     Involvement
2. New Beginnings	<ul> <li>knowledge of Policy/Program Memorandum 122</li> <li>identification of issues and challenges</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>parent group members</li> <li>parents</li> <li>community members</li> <li>staff</li> <li>transition team</li> </ul>	<ul><li>3) Characteristics of Effective Schools</li><li>4) Partners for Learning</li><li>5) Jigsaw Activity #1</li><li>6) Summary Sheet</li></ul>
3. Dealing with Issues	<ul> <li>strategies to deal with issues identified in Activity 2</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>parent group members</li> <li>parents</li> <li>community members</li> <li>staff</li> <li>transition team</li> </ul>	7) Carousel Brainstorming
4. Meaningful Involvement	<ul> <li>characteristics of involvement that positively influence student learning</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>parent group members</li> <li>parents</li> <li>community members</li> <li>staff</li> <li>transition team</li> </ul>	8) Jigsaw Activity #2 9) Advantages of an Advisory Body
5. Making the Transition	<ul> <li>knowledge of changes to become a school council</li> </ul>	parent group members	<ul><li>10) School Council/ Current Parent Group Comparison</li><li>11) Questions for Parent Groups</li></ul>
6. Effective School Councils	<ul> <li>knowledge of characteristics of effective councils</li> </ul>	• transition team	12) Summary of Characteristics of Effective Councils
7. Planning for the Transition	• a plan for the next 60-100 days	• transition team	13) Planning Framework
8. Reach Out to Our Community	<ul> <li>strategies to communicate with and involve parents and community</li> </ul>	• transition team	14) Communication Strategies

3. GETTING STARTED

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# Activity 1 – Respecting the Past



## Idea - show recognition!

To show appreciation to parents and community members or groups for their involvement, ask volunteers to select a favourite new book, CD-ROM, video, etc. in the school library. Dedicate the selected item to the volunteer and allow his or her child to be the first to read it or view it!

### **Possible Participants:**

 community members, parents, parent group members, transition team, and staff

### Time:

• 30 to 45 minutes

### **Outcomes:**

- understanding of the current level of parental and community involvement in the school
- recognition of the contributions of volunteers to the school

### **Materials:**

- summary of research by Joyce Epstein (master worksheet 1)
- chart paper
- markers
- handout
- activity sheet (master worksheet 2)

### Tasks:

- 1. Introduce the six levels of parent involvement and review the purpose of each.
- 2. Brainstorm current involvement of committees, groups, and organizations in the school, in the community, with staff and with parents. Record on chart (master worksheet 2).
- 3. Discuss and record, in small groups, the benefits of involvement to students, staff, and community.
- 4. Discuss ways to communicate and celebrate involvement through newsletters, parent meetings, and/or displays.

# Activity 2 – New Beginnings

### **Possible Participants:**

• community members, parents, parent group members, transition team, and staff

### Time:

• 60 to 90 minutes

### **Outcomes:**

- a knowledge and clarification of the intent of Policy/Program Memorandum 122
- · identification of the issues and challenges

### Materials:

- copies of Policy/Program Memorandum 122 (Appendix 1)
- overheads of instructions and activity sheet (master worksheets 3,4,5,6)
- self-stick removable notes
- "Common Miracles" video

### Tasks:

- 1. Introduce the policy with references to the value of parental and community involvement (master worksheets 3 and 4). For further information, see Activity 4.
- 2. If available show segment from "Common Miracles" video related to the role of parental and community involvement in education to demonstrate worldwide trends.
- 3. Introduce the policy as a co-operative group activity, the "jigsaw":
  - organize into small groups of four to six
  - assign roles of timekeeper, materials manager, recorder, and reporter

### Timekeeper:

- · five minutes to read
- five minutes to teach
- twenty minutes to complete the worksheet

Materials manager: picks up a copy of the policy for each participant and one copy of the worksheet

Recorder: records key points on the worksheet

Reporter: shares group's questions with overall group

- assigns letters to each participant A,B,C,D (repeat if the group is larger than four)
- assigns a section (as indicated on master 5) to each person to read and highlight key points
- participants then teach their section to other group members
- completes the worksheet (master 6)
- 4. Ask the group to decide on questions of clarification, issues, and support required.
- 5. Respond to the questions or seek answers and report back.
- 6. Collect worksheets to collate; issues and support identified by the group will be addressed at a future meeting.
- 7. Discuss the next steps that would be appropriate for your school (see Activity 3).

### Resources

"Common Miracles: The New American Revolution in Learning", VHS format.
ABC News, 1993
SMA Distributors
45 Coldwater Road
Don Mills Ontario M3B 1Y8
1-800-267-1216

# Activity 3 – Dealing with Issues Related to the Implementation of School Councils

### **Possible Participants:**

 community members, parents, parent group members, transition team, and staff

### Time:

• 60 minutes

### **Outcomes:**

• strategies to deal with the issues identified in Activity 2

### Materials:

- markers
- package of adhesive coloured dots
- chart paper
- · issues from previous meeting
- carousel brainstorming directions (master worksheet 7)

### Tasks:

- 1. Select five to six issues from the previous activity (e.g., community outreach, communications, meaningful involvement, knowledge and skills required, etc.) See master worksheet 7.
- 2. Record one issue at the top of each chart page. Post charts on the walls around the room.
- 3. Divide participants into groups of three to seven. Assign each group to one chart. Provide each group with a different-coloured marker.
- 4. Ask groups to brainstorm strategies to deal with the issue and record them on the charts allow three minutes at the chart.
- 5. Call time and ask groups to stop recording and rotate to the next chart.
- 6. Rotate groups through at least four of the issues.
- 7. a) Provide each participant with at least six small coloured adhesive dots. Ask each to review the strategies on all of the charts independently, and place a coloured dot next to an idea that is supported strongly one dot per idea! Review the ideas most strongly supported.
  - b) Ask groups to return to their original charts and decide on two or three good strategies. Share with overall group.
- 8. Summarize strategies for use when planning.

### Activity 4 – Meaningful Involvement – What Is It?

### **Possible Participants:**

 community members, parents, parent group members, transition team, and staff

### Time:

• 60 to 90 minutes

### **Outcomes:**

knowledge of meaningful involvement

### Materials:

- copies of the article "Reasons for Involving Parents", by Peter Ross (York University) see Appendix 7
- video\* "Involving Parents in Education" (J. Epstein)
- overheads (master worksheets 8,9)
- chart paper

### Tasks:

- 1. Review the rationale for school councils (master 9).
- 2. Divide participants into groups of three and letter them A to C.
- 3. Assign readings (master 8).
- 4. Read (five minutes) and then teach (five minutes) your segment of the article to your group.
- 5. As a group, summarize on chart paper the key learnings.
- 6. Share with overall group.
- 7. Reflect on current forms of involvement and possible other ways to involve parents and community.
- 8. If available, summarize with video "Involving Parents in Education".

### **Resources:**

J. Epstein, "Involving Parents in Education", VHS format. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development 1250 Pitt Street Alexandria VA USA 22314

<sup>\*</sup> Depending on the audience, the entire video may be used rather than the articles. If only using the video, proceed to task 5. Another option is to use only the summary of research (Epstein, master 1).

# Activity 5 – Making the Transition

### **Possible Participants:**

parent group members

### Time:

30 to 60 minutes (may need additional time for decision-making)

### **Outcomes:**

 a knowledge of the changes required to make the transition to being a school council

### **Materials:**

- comparison worksheet (master 10)
- questions (master worksheet 11)

### Tasks:

- 1. Outline options of remaining as the current parent group or changing to a school council (see Policy/Program Memorandum 122).
- 2. Identify the similarities and differences between a school council and the current parent group (master 10).
- 3. Pose questions to the group for discussion (master 11).
- 4. Identify the changes and the actions required.
- 5. Make decision following discussion.

# Activity 6 – Effective School Councils

### **Possible Participants:**

• transition team

### Time:

• 20 to 30 minutes

### **Outcomes:**

• knowledge of the characteristics of what makes an effective school council

### **Materials:**

- results of previous activities, posted on charts around the room
- self-stick removable notes (7.5 cm x 7.5 cm)
- chart paper
- markers
- summary (master 12)

### Tasks:

- 1. Provide each participant with five self-stick notes.
- 2. Ask participants to reflect on the new school council and its mandate.
- 3. Record one idea on each note about what you would see or hear if the council was effective from the perspective of a student, parent, community member, taxpayer, principal, teacher, or other staff member.
- 4. Post the ideas on chart paper (one page for five to eight people).
- 5. Have the group gather around charts to read ideas.
- 6. Group similar ideas together.
- 7. Label the categories.
- 8. Share with the overall group.
- 9. Develop a list of criteria and post on large chart paper.
- 10. Compare with the Summary of Characteristics (master worksheet 12).

# Activity 7 – Planning for the Transition

### Participants:

• transition team

### Time:

varied

### **Outcomes:**

• a plan for the next 60 - 100 days

### Materials:

• planning framework (master worksheet 13)

### Tasks:

Using information from the previous activities, decide on strategies, timelines, and persons responsible for addressing areas such as:

- communication
- outreach
- training
- the first meeting

### Activity 8 – Reaching Out to Our Community

### **Possible Participants:**

• transition team

### Time:

• 30 minutes

### **Outcomes:**

• strategies for informing the community about school councils

### Materials:

- chart paper
- strategies (master worksheet 14)
- markers

### Tasks:

- Review current ways to communicate and to whom the school communicates.
- 2. Discuss the effectiveness of each method.
- 3. Brainstorm new strategies to reach out to new audiences, considering diversity of community languages spoken.
- 4. Decide on audiences and three or four ways to share information, timelines, and persons responsible.

# **Appendices**

### Policy / Program Memorandum No. 122

**Ontario** 

Ministry of Education and Training

Issued under the authority of the Deputy Minister of Education and Training

Policy/Program Memorandum No. 122

Date of Issue:

April 12, 1995

Effective:

Until revoked

or modified

Subject:

SCHOOL BOARD POLICIES ON SCHOOL COUNCILS

Application:

Chairpersons of School Boards and Minority-Language Sections Directors of Education Principals of Schools

### BACKGROUND

The government recognizes that the education of Ontario's young people is a shared responsibility involving schools, students and their families, and members of the community. Parents and guardians have the right, as well as the responsibility, to participate in the education of their children, and can contribute to their children's development in a wide variety of ways. Other members of the community, including members of health, social service, and recreational agencies, also offer a wealth of experience and expertise that may be of benefit to students. Students themselves may have some excellent suggestions pertaining to their education. Members of all of these groups should, therefore, have the opportunity to advise in educational matters.

The Ministry of Education and Training is committed to encouraging partnerships that will enhance the education of the province's young people and foster increased sharing of information about the programs being offered by schools. In Ontario, many schools already have an association or committee that enables parents and other community members to provide input on topics pertaining to the school's educational program. Feedback from these committees and associations and from the schools has been positive and encouraging, and indicates that community participation has been very valuable.

The recent reports of the Royal Commission on Learning and the Ontario Parent Council have recommended that all schools be required to establish advisory committees to increase communication between schools and their communities and, in the words of the commission's report, to enable parents and students to assume "a more responsible and active role" in education programs and services within their local community. These reports support similar recommendations made over the years by provincial parent associations.

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Policy/Program Memorandum No. 122

### DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL BOARD POLICIES ON SCHOOL COUNCILS

The provincial policy on school councils will require school boards and minority-language sections to develop policies that direct schools in their jurisdictions to begin the establishment of school councils in September 1995, and to ensure that a school council is in place in all schools by June 1996. This memorandum outlines the minimum requirements for the composition and functioning of school councils that must be included in each school board's or section's policy.\(^1\)

School board policies should enable school communities either to establish entirely new organizations as the school councils or to set up the school councils by adapting existing parent/community associations or committees so that they conform to the requirements set out in this memorandum. It is important to note, however, that school communities may have parent/community organizations in addition to the school councils. The school councils are not intended to replace such organizations, which continue to make valuable contributions within the education community.

School boards are encouraged to involve parents in the development of board policies on school councils.

### MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COMPOSITION AND OPERATION OF SCHOOL COUNCILS

School boards must ensure that the following requirements are included in their policies on school councils.

### 1. Membership and Term of Office

Members of a school council shall include, but not be limited to:

- parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school;
- community representatives;
- a student (mandatory in secondary schools; in elementary schools, at the discretion of the principal);
- the school principal;
- a teacher;
- a non-teaching staff member.

Parents and guardians shall form the majority of the council, except in adult day schools, where parent positions shall be held by students. It is expected that the membership of the council will reflect the diversity of the school community.

<sup>1.</sup> Henceforth in this document, the term "school board" includes minority-language sections.

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Membership in the school council shall be determined in the following ways:

- Parents shall be elected by parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school.
- The chair of the council shall be a member who is also a parent and shall be elected by the council.
- Community representatives shall be appointed by the council.
- The student representative shall be elected by students.
- The school principal shall be a designated member.
- The teacher representative shall be elected by members of the teaching staff.
- The non-teaching staff member shall be elected by members of the non-teaching staff.

The term of office for elected and appointed positions shall be one or two years, as determined by board policy. Elected and appointed members may seek additional terms of office.

There will be no honorarium paid to members of the school council.

### 2. Roles and Responsibilities of the School Councils

School councils are advisory bodies. A school council will provide advice to the school principal and, where appropriate, to the school board on any of the matters listed below that the council has identified as priorities:

- local school-year calendar
- school code of student behaviour
- curriculum and program goals and priorities
- the responses of the school or school board to achievement in provincial and board assessment programs
- preparation of the school profile
- selection of principals
- school budget priorities, including local capital-improvement plans
- school-community communication strategies
- methods of reporting to parents and the community
- extracurricular activities in the school
- school-based services and community partnerships related to social, health, recreational, and nutrition programs
- community use of school facilities
- local co-ordination of services for children and youth
- development, implementation, and review of board policies at the local level

The provincial policy will require that a school board's policy direct the school principal and, where relevant, senior staff and trustees of the board to seek advice from the school council as part of the process of making decisions with regard to the matters listed above.

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In addition to its advisory responsibilities, the school council shall:

- establish its goals, priorities, and procedures;
- organize information and training sessions to enable members of the council to develop their skills as council members;
- hold a minimum of four meetings per year (all meetings shall be open to members of the school community);
- communicate regularly with parents and other members of the community to seek their views and preferences with regard to matters being addressed by the council, and to report on the activities of the council to the school community;
- promote the best interests of the school community.

### 3. Roles and Responsibilities of School Council Members

### a) Chair

The chair of the school council shall:

- call school council meetings;
- prepare the agenda for school council meetings;
- chair school council meetings;
- ensure that the minutes of school council meetings are recorded and maintained;
- participate in information and training programs;
- communicate with the school principal;
- ensure that there is regular communication with the school community;
- consult with senior board staff and trustees, as required.

### b) Council Members

The members of the school council shall:

- participate in council meetings;
- participate in information and training programs;
- act as a link between the school council and the community;
- encourage the participation of parents from all groups and of other people within the school community.

### c) The Principal

The principal of the school shall:

- facilitate the establishment of the school council and assist in its operation;
- support and promote the council's activities;
- seek input from the council in areas for which it has been assigned advisory responsibility;
- act as a resource on laws, regulations, board policies, and collective agreements;
- obtain and provide information required by the council to enable it to make informed decisions;
- communicate with the chair of the council, as required;



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- ensure that copies of the minutes of the council's meetings are kept at the school;
- assist the council in communicating with the school community;
- encourage the participation of parents from all groups and of other people within the school community.

### 4. The School Board and the School Councils

Some school boards already include parents and other members of the community in an advisory role at the board level. School boards are encouraged to continue, or to initiate, this practice. Boards are also encouraged to facilitate communication among the school councils within their jurisdiction.

School boards shall review and revise their policies on the selection of principals to ensure that the school councils participate in principal selection. Boards shall also involve representatives of their school councils in the revision of these policies.

### 5. Evaluation and Reporting

School boards shall develop procedures for evaluating the implementation of their policies on the establishment and operation of school councils.

A report on the establishment and operation of the school councils shall be included in the annual report of the director of education of each school board.

### ASSISTANCE FROM THE MINISTRY

### School Council Handbook

The ministry will collaborate with stakeholders to produce a school council handbook to assist school boards, schools, and school councils. The handbook will contain materials and information to help boards establish school councils and to assist the members of school councils in carrying out their responsibilities. It will be available in September 1995.

### Professional Development

The ministry will work with school boards and other organizations and stakeholders to ensure that such programs as the Supervisory Officer's Qualification Program and the Principal's Qualification Program prepare school board members and principals for their work with school councils. The ministry will also collaborate with boards and other stakeholders to develop in-service programs and materials for school council members.





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### School Council Forum

The ministry and stakeholder groups will organize a School Council Forum in the spring of 1996. This forum is intended to provide opportunities for representatives of school councils and school boards throughout the province to discuss their experiences in setting up and maintaining their councils. It will also enable members of school councils across the province to establish a basis for networking. Further details about the forum will be provided later this year.

### **Understanding PPM 122: Questions and Answers**

The following questions and answers should help explain how school councils will work, and why. They are grouped by topic: General, Definitions, Developing the Policy, Elections, Roles and Responsibilities, and Implementation.

### **General Information**



### How will the school council be accountable?

The school council will conform to the requirements of board policy and procedures and be accountable to the school community it represents.



### Is Ontario the only place requiring school councils in all its schools?

No. School councils are being established in most other provinces and territories in Canada, and in many other locations around the world. Although there are some differences in the composition and roles of the councils from one locality to another, most share the principle of promoting more collaboration among the school, the home, and other community partners.



### How do we determine whether issues are to be discussed at school or board levels?

PPM 122 outlines a variety of matters on which the school council may advise the principal and, where appropriate, the school board. Each school board should develop a process for determining the types of information it will seek, and a strategy for sharing such information with the board administrators and trustees. Trustees, principals, and

school boards will continue to perform their duties and responsibilities as specified in the Education Act, regulations, board policies, and procedures.



### Are school councils mandatory?

As outlined in PPM 122, school councils are to be in place in all schools by June 1996.

### Definitions



### What is meant by "advisory"?

When advising, the school council will provide ideas and opinions to assist the principal in making decisions. The advice should reflect the views of the school community and what is best for the students.



### What is meant by "the school community" in PPM 122?

Parents and guardians of children who are enrolled in the school, along with other people who live or work within the school's attendance area, make up the school community.

### **Policy Development**



### How will conflict-of-interest issues applying to school council members be dealt with?

Each school board may define "conflict of interest" and develop a process to deal with such situations.

### What liability will council members have for the advice they provide to schools and school boards? Will members require insurance?

OSBIE (Ontario School Board Insurance Exchange) provides liability insurance for the majority of Ontario school boards. Those school boards should contact OSBIE with respect to their coverage. Boards that are insured with other insurers should check with their brokers about coverage for school councils. OSBIE advises that its liability insurance extends to volunteers who are working within the scope of their duties on behalf of the school board.

### What authority will school boards have over local school councils?

Boards will develop local policies and procedures within the requirements of PPM 122 which provide guidelines for school councils. Boards should consider including a mechanism for dispute resolution in their procedures.

### Will school council meetings be open to the public?

Yes.

### How will councils decide what kind of advice they should try to give?

Each council will determine priorities to reflect student needs, community views, and the school growth or improvement plan.

### Does each school council have to have a constitution?

The board policy and procedures should provide direction. School councils will probably need some guidelines to give all members a common understanding of how the group will function.

### Elections



### Who can be elected as a parent representative?

Anyone who is a parent or guardian of a child enrolled in the school can be elected as a parent representative for its school council.

### Can trustees seek election as parent representatives?

Trustees who are parents or guardians of students in that school can be elected by parents. Boards may wish to address this in their procedures.

### Can parents who work for the school board be elected as parent representatives?

Any parent or guardian of students enrolled in the school may be elected by parents to serve on the council.

### Do parents have to be Catholic to serve on a school council in a separate school?

Separate school boards may develop procedures that require members elected to the school council to hold the qualifications necessary to be a trustee of the board.

### Does a parent have to be a "French-speaking person" who has rights under \$23 of the charter to serve on a school council in a French-language school?

Since the working language of the council in a French-language school will be French, the ability to speak French, while not essential, will allow members of the council to participate fully in the work of the council. Frenchlanguage sections may want to ensure that persons sitting on councils for their schools are entitled under the charter to have their children educated in the French language.

# Can parents be appointed as community representatives?

Yes, if the council decides to appoint them. However, the council may prefer to choose someone from a community group, or a business or service organization within the school community, that is not represented on the council.

What happens if an election does not result in representation of the diversity of the community?

School councils may appoint community representatives to ensure that the diversity of the community is represented.

What qualifications do people need to sit on school councils?

Qualifications for elected and appointed members are outlined in PPM 122. Any additional criteria may be determined by the board in consultation with all partners.

What happens when not enough parents want to be involved?

The school council will maintain vacant positions as it begins its work, and continue to seek involvement of parents through outreach strategies.

How do we gain membership from non-teaching staff, especially in small schools?

Every effort should be made to encourage non-teaching staff to become members of the school council. Where no non-teaching staff person is available or agrees to participate, the school council will operate without representation from the non-teaching staff.

In developing their policy and guidelines, boards may want to consider that non-teaching staff who are school council members may have to attend meetings during working hours. Serving on the council is voluntary and there is no honorarium.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Can trustees attend the school council meetings?

Yes, they are open meetings.

How will school councils relate to the school board?

Boards should develop a procedure for seeking input from school councils and for communicating with them.

What happens if the school council or a member of the council comments upon personnel matters and matters that are dealt with under collective agreements?

Personnel matters are the responsibility of a school board's administration, operating in accordance with board policy. Employment issues will continue to be dealt with by the board and principal according to processes for employee matters. Both the council and individual members of the council can incur personal liability if they exceed their mandate.

What will happen if a council insists upon a course of action that contravenes board policy?

Members of a council may be personally liable if they go beyond the advisory role or do not follow the ministry or board policies. Each board should provide councils with a clear statement regarding liability insurance and coverage.

# What does PPM 122 mean when it states that school councils will participate in the selection of principals?

School councils will have opportunities to provide input to the criteria for the selection of principals, and to identify the specific needs of their schools when principals are being transferred. Boards may choose to exceed these requirements. School councils will not be involved, however, in issues relating to performance of individual staff members, as this is covered in collective agreements, board policies, and legislation.

# Will school councils be involved in the hiring of other staff?

School councils are advisory bodies and will not be involved in staff hiring. They are not authorized to deal with employment issues.

### What will the role of principals be?

Principals are to be designated members of the school council. They will facilitate the establishment of the school council, attend council meetings, and support the activities of the council. They will assist in the distribution of information from the council to the community, obtain information about education legislation and board policies and provide it to members of the school council, and seek the advice of the council in those areas in which the council has responsibility for providing advice. Principals will also play a key role in identifying, developing, and sustaining alliances with key community groups and organizations.

# Are principals accountable for acting on the advice of the school councils?

Principals will take the advice of the councils into consideration during the process of decision making. Boards may include in

their procedures guidelines for the appropriate incorporation of advice into the decision-making process.

### **Implementation**



Each school board may provide a process to resolve conflicts that may develop.

# Will there be training for members of the school councils?

Training modules will be designed for members of the school councils to assist them in their new roles. The training may be provided by board staff or parents.

In addition, training sessions will be made available to boards to assist principals in developing the collaborative leadership skills necessary to support effective school councils.

### Will each council have a budget?

No new funding will be provided for school councils. It is anticipated that they will be self-funding, as are current parent groups.

# Given the encouraged ethnic diversity, will the use of interpreters be necessary? If so, who will pay?

Individual boards may decide that interpreters are necessary to encourage community involvement. Boards would then be responsible for associated costs.

### **Appendix 3**

# Sample Board Policies

### From the Wellington County Board of Education

It is the policy of the Wellington County Board of Education that each school establish a school council. The council will act in an advisory capacity to the school's principal and the board for the continued promotion of excellence throughout the system, and will place the overall interests of the school and students first.

School councils will operate within the parameters of the Education Act and other relevant legislation, the board's strategic plan "Excellence through Partnership", and board policies and agreements, including collective agreements.

draft, October 1995

### From the Oxford County Board of Education

It shall be the policy that each school has a school council.

draft, June 1995

### From the Waterloo County Board of Education

The Waterloo County Board of Education believes that:

- Schools require forums for dialogue and collaboration to provide information and support for school plans that provide opportunities for growth and improvement, and the attainment of student learning outcomes.
- Schools value partnerships of learners which include students, staff, parents, and the wider community. The purpose of these partnerships is to enhance student learning.
- Within our diverse community, the contributions of all participants in the partnership are valued; there are many ways for the school and community to equitably share responsibility and demonstrate accountability for student learning outcomes.
- Schools and school organizational structures are accountable to students and parents for a learning environment and programs which enhance the achievement of our learning outcomes.

Each school within the Waterloo County Board of Education shall establish and maintain a school advisory council that focuses on strategies and activities to enhance the learning environment.

Within the school advisory council, parents, school staff, and members of the community work together co-operatively to meet agreed-upon educational goals.

draft, September 1995

#### From the Simcoe County Board of Education

It is the policy of the Simcoe County Board of Education that each school in its jurisdiction provide for the establishment and operation of a school council.

**Rationale** – The Simcoe County Board of Education through its mission statement holds the beliefs that successful education requires active participation among the school, the home, and the community, and that effective relationships between the education system and the communities are promoted through consultation, collaboration, and strong communication programs.

The board supports the formation of community groups which assist schools in advancing the interests of students and acknowledges the many such groups which have been established throughout the school system.

The board believes that relationships between its schools and their communities can be strengthened through the establishment of local school councils which serve as an ongoing mechanism for effective two-way communication, for consultation, and for a measure of shared decision-making between the school and the school community. The board promotes as objectives of school councils and school-community organizations the following:

- the promotion of positive attitudes towards the education of students in the school;
- the promotion of effective two-way communication between home and school;
- the promotion of effective approaches to consultative and collaborative relationships among home, school, and community;
- the promotion of increased parental participation in the education of their children.

draft, October 1995

#### From the Huron-Perth County Roman Catholic Separate School Board

Each school will establish a local school council, made up of parents, teachers, students (where appropriate), and community residents.

approved, June 1994, amended, June 1995

#### From the Lincoln County Roman Catholic Separate School Board

The Lincoln County Roman Catholic Separate School Board recognizes that Catholic education is a shared responsibility of the school, the home, the parish, and the community.

The school component is comprised of the board of trustees, its executive officers, administrative officials, and support staff, the principal and teachers of the school, other support staff employed at the school, and the students.

The home component is comprised of the parents and/or guardians of the students, and the students themselves when they are adults.

The parish component is comprised of the pastor, and support staff at the parish and parish organizations, under the leadership of the Bishop.

The community component is comprised of members of health, social service, and recreational agencies, volunteer agencies, local business and industry, and local rate-payers.

When all of these groups enthusiastically and co-operatively share this responsibility our students benefit. When the goal of this co-operation and shared responsibility is the achievement of the mission of Catholic education, then the power of the Holy Spirit is present.

To support and effect this co-operative responsibility the Lincoln County Roman Catholic Separate School Board shall ensure the establishment of a Catholic school council in each of its schools and provide regulations in support of the role and responsibilities of Catholic school councils.

draft, September 1995

#### From the Sudbury District Roman Catholic Separate School Board

It is the belief of the Sudbury District Roman Catholic Separate School Board that the total educational enterprise is enhanced through increased involvement between home and school. The schools of the Sudbury District Roman Catholic Separate School Board must deliver Catholic education in partnership with the family, the parish, and the community as a means of developing learners who can contribute positively to the Church and society.

It is the goal of the board:

- to ensure that the distinct Catholic character of the system is fostered by positive, working links with the Church through its parishes and other organizational bodies;
- to develop and sustain internal and external communication and consultative processes that:
  - inform all key stakeholders within the Catholic education system;
  - assist parent involvement in their children's learning;
  - solicit stakeholders' input on key issues;
  - develop partnerships with other sectors of the community;
  - raise the profile of the Catholic school system in the community;
- to develop an organizational structure that is functionally efficient and fosters participation throughout the organization.

Therefore the board directs that each school shall establish a Catholic school council that will assist in realizing the goals of the Sudbury District Roman Catholic School Board and will provide a direct communication channel between home and school.

draft, September 1995

#### **Appendix 4**

## Sample Board Procedures

#### **Role and Responsibilities of School Councils**

#### From the Wellington County Board of Education

- 1. School councils are advisory bodies. A school council will provide advice to the principal and, where appropriate, to the board on any matters that it identifies as priorities. These could include:
  - a) local school calendar of events;
  - b) school code of student behaviour;
  - c) curriculum and program goals and priorities;
  - d) the responses of the school or board to achievement in provincial and board assessment programs;
  - e) recommendations about the process of hiring and assigning school administrators and staff (prepare goals and profile of the school that would assist the board in the selection and placement process);
  - f) school budget priorities, including local capital improvement plans;
  - g) school/community communication strategies;
  - h) methods of reporting to parents and the community;
  - i) extracurricular activities in the school;
  - j) school-based services and community partnerships related to social, health, recreational, and nutritional programs;
  - k) community use of school facilities;
  - 1) local co-ordination of services for children and youth;
  - m) development, implementation, and review of board policies at the local level.
- 2. When feasible, principals and, where relevant, senior administration and trustees will seek advice from the school councils as part of the decision-making process with regard to the matters listed above.
- 3. In addition to its advisory responsibilities, the school council shall:
  - a) promote the best interests of the school community;
  - b) establish its goals, priorities, and procedures;
  - c) enable members of the council to develop their skills as members by promoting attendance at board-organized training sessions;
  - d) hold a minimum of four meetings per year (all meetings shall be open to members of the school community);
  - e) communicate regularly with parents and other members of the community to seek their views and preferences with regard to matters being addressed by the council.

draft, 1995

#### From the Simcoe County Board of Education

Council members are to maintain a school-wide focus on all issues. Council meetings are not a forum for discussion about individual parents, students, staff, trustees, or other council members.

draft, October 1995

#### From the Oxford County Board of Education

A school council provides a structure through which the school's stake-holders work collaboratively with the school principal in order that the school's policies, curriculum, learning resources, instruction, and procedures can be continually adapted to serve the needs of the learning community.

A school council shall focus on contributing to student learning by:

- representing the main groups which have a stake in the issues to be addressed;
- reflecting diverse backgrounds and viewpoints found in the school's learning community;
- identifying local community priorities which help in setting longrange goals for the school;
- identifying ways to mobilize local community support for, and involvement in, the mission of the school; and
- advising the principal on communicating with the school community in order to promote positive community/school relations.

draft, June 1995

#### **Role of the Board**

#### From the Wellington County Board of Education

- a) The board shall continue to include parents and other members of the community in an advisory role at the board level. Through the Parent-Teacher Organization Liaison Committee, the board will continue to facilitate communication among school councils.
- b) The board shall review and revise its policies on the selection and placement process of school administrators to ensure the opportunity for participation by council representatives. School council representatives shall be involved in the revision of these policies.
- c) The board shall continue to support the ongoing leadership training of school council members and administrators.
- d) The board shall provide expertise to school councils.

draft, 1995

#### From the Waterloo County Board of Education

It is the responsibility of the school board to:

- invite input as to the qualities, skills, attitudes, and training/education for the board and administration to consider in the selection of school principals, teachers, and support staff;
- involve representatives of school councils in the revision of these policies;
- develop procedures to evaluate the implementation and operation of school councils; and
- report, through the director's annual report, on the establishment and operation of school councils within the board.

draft, September 1995

#### **Elections**

#### From the Durham Board of Education

- 1. The D.B.E. Summary of Election Procedures shall be filed with the Superintendent of Community Services by October 30, 1995.
- 2. Elections for S.C.C. [School Council Committee] shall be conducted by secret ballot. Neither proxy nor absentee voting is permitted. Voters must be present at the school on the election day and must vote in person.
- 3. Parents and legal guardians of a student enrolled at the school are eligible both to vote for and to run as a parent representative.
  - No additional qualifiers or quotas may be used to restrict eligibility either to vote for or run as a parent candidate. (For example, child's program, grade, location of home, etc.)
  - Board of Education employees may both vote for and run as a parent representative at any public school where their children are enrolled.
- 4. Candidate declaration as prescribed by the Durham Board of Education shall be filed by all candidates for elected positions on the S.C.C.
- 5. The principal shall conduct a lottery to determine the randomly selected ballot position for each candidate.
- 6. All eligible voters shall be entitled to cast one vote for up to a total of the number of candidate positions available in the specific category (teacher, parent, etc.) at their school. Casting more than the maximum number of votes permitted in the category spoils the ballot.

- 7. If there is a tie for the final position for a representative on the S.C.C., the winner shall be determined by lot.
- 8. No individual campaign literature for S.C.C. elections may be distributed or posted in the school. The exception to this ruling will be made for the candidate forum.
- 9. School resources, both human and material, may not be used to support particular candidates or groups of candidates.
- 10. The election day proceedings shall be supervised by the school principal.
- 11. Appeals related to the S.C.C. election shall be resolved by the S.C.C. elections ad hoc committee. If the situation is not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, the school principal shall make a ruling.
- 12. If all elected positions have not been filled at the end of the election process and vacancies exist, the newly constituted S.C.C. shall appoint the necessary number of eligible persons to serve for the balance of the term of office. If appointments fail to fill all positions, the S.C.C. shall proceed to operate as long as a parent majority exists.
- 13. All appointments to the S.C.C. are by majority vote of the members at the meeting then serving on the S.C.C. Appointments shall be made at a public meeting with appropriate public notice of the meeting.
- 14. The principal in consultation with the S.C.C. elections ad hoc committee shall call the first meeting of the S.C.C. within thirty (30) days of the parent representative elections.
- 15. The newly elected S.C.C. shall elect a temporary chair to preside at the meetings until the community representatives have been appointed plus any additional appointments required due to vacancies following the elections.

The permanent chair of the S.C.C. shall be elected by members of the S.C.C. after all appointments have been made to the council. This election shall occur within thirty (30) days of the first S.C.C. meeting.

approved, October 1995

#### From the Oxford County Board of Education

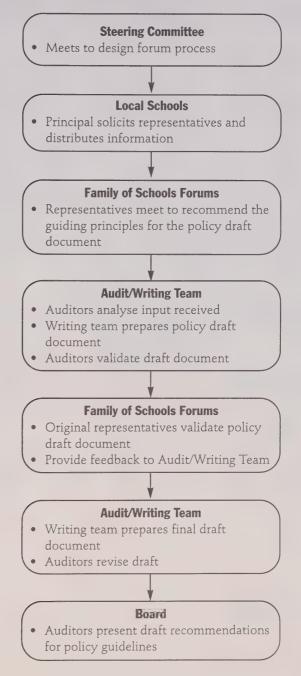
Parents and guardians shall be elected by parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school.

- 1. Where a school does not have a parent group already in existence, the process for establishing the parent and community representatives on the school council in the initial year shall be determined by the principal in consultation with the Director of Education and the Area Superintendent. Thereafter, the school council shall establish the process for the election of parent/guardian representatives to the school council in a manner consistent with 2 below. The procedures shall be set out in the organization's bylaws.
- 2. Where a parent group already exists at a school (e.g. Home and School, P.T.A., organized parent group, etc.) that organization shall ensure that parents and guardians are elected to the school council through a process where the parents and guardians of all children in the school are invited to participate in the elections and are eligible to hold a position on the council. The procedures shall be set out in the organization's bylaws.

draft, June 1995

#### Sample Board Consultation Models

## **Task Force Process for Developing Policy Guidelines for School Councils**



#### From the York Region Board of Education

#### A. Consultation Meetings

Four opportunities are being provided for interested individuals or parties to make a presentation to the School Councils Advisory Committee regarding the School Councils discussion and consultation process and the implementation of School Councils.

Meetings:

1) West : Wednesday, October 18 : Vaughan Secondary School : 7:30 pm-9:30 pm

1401 Clark Ave, West, Thornhill

2) East : Wednesday, October 25 : Markham District High School : 7:30 pm-9:30 pm

89 Church Street, Markham

3) Central: Monday, October 30: Community Education Centre Central: 7:30 pm-9:30 pm

317 Centre St. East, Richmond Hill

4) North : Thursday, November 2: Community Educ. Centre North : 7:30 pm -9:30 pm

130 Carlson Drive, Newmarket

To arrange a presentation time, please call Gayle Erskine - (905) 764-6830.

#### **B. Written Submissions**

Written submissions from interested individuals or groups can be sent to:

School Councils Advisory Committee

c/o Bill Gordon

Superintendent of Schools

Community Education Centre West

The York Region Board of Education

36 Stornoway Crescent

Thornhill, Ontario

L3T 3X7

#### C. Voice Mailbox

A voice mailbox is provided for personal comments and input at the Education Centre, Aurora. Call the appropriate automated attendant at 722-6255, 895-7227, 727-0022 and (416) 969-7170, Ext. 471.

#### D. Direct Verbal Communication

Direct verbal communication with Bill Gordon, Superintendent of Schools, School Councils responsibility, who will gather any verbal input and respond to all questions.

Call (905) 764-6830.

September 1995

Deadline: October 15, 1995

#### Appendix 6

#### Sample Board Communication Strategies

#### From the Simcoe County Board of Education

## WHAT IS A SCHOOL COUNCIL

School councils are advisory bodies to be established in every Simcoe County school. The mandate of the council will be to analyze and provide input to the principal on a number of significant areas that lead to school improvements.

There will be many potential areas for council input. Some examples of these areas are:

- school code of student behaviour:
- the response of the school or school board to achievement in provincial and board assessment programs;
- school budget priorities, including local capital improvement plans;
- curriculum and program goals and priorities;
- · preparation of school profiles;
- development, implementation and review of board policies at the local level.

## WHO CAN BE A MEMBER OF A SCHOOL COUNCIL

Members of the school council will include the following elected members:

- parents/guardians of students enrolled in the school;
- students (mandatory in secondary schools; recommended in elementary schools);
- teachers assigned to the school;
- non-teaching employees of the school.

As well, the council members will include:

- the school principal;
- community representatives appointed by the council.

## HOW WILL A SCHOOL COUNCIL ?

- All members of the council will be equal partners.
- It is recommended that the size of the council will not exceed 15 members
- Parents/guardians will form a majority on the council. (Exceptions to this are adult day schools)
- The chair of the council will be a parent/guardian elected by council members.
- All council meetings will be open to the community.
- The council will meet a minimum of four times per year.
- Schools may have parent/ community organizations in addition to the school councils. The councils need not replace such organizations, which continue to make valuable contributions to the educational community.

# WHAT WOULD BE MY RESPONSIBILITY AS A MEMBER OF A SCHOOL COUNCIL

Members of a school council will be expected to:

- focus on student learning and school improvement;
- maintain a school-wide perspective on issues;
- represent and communicate the views of the school community;
- provide informed advice to the school principal;
- contribute regularly at council meetings (minimum of four per school year)

# WHEN WILL SCHOOL COUNCILS BE STARTING IN SIMCOE COUNTY

- Schools in Simcoe County will be expected to have school councils in place by June 1996.
- All schools will be holding information sessions throughout the 1995-1996 school year.
   Elections will be held in May-June 1996.
- Contact your local elementary or secondary school for more detailed information.

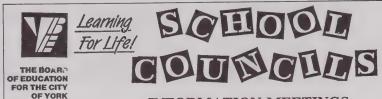
#### The Simcoe County Board of Education



School Councils

..an invitation to meaningful participation in the education of our youth.

draft brochure, October 1995



#### INFORMATION MEETINGS

7:30 - 9:00 P.M.

The Ministry of Education & Training requires that membership on the School Council includes: parents, principal, teacher, support staff representative, community representatives and student (high school level only).

Come and share your opinions with the Steering Committee on the establishment of our new School Councils.

#### MAKE SURE YOUR VOICE IS HEARD!

#### TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24 - Runnymede Collegiate Institute 569 Jane Street

(Humbercrest, Lambton Park, Runnymede C.I., Warren Park, King George School)

- Weston Collegiate Institute

(Bala Ave. H.J. Alexander, Weston Memorial, C.R. Marchant, Weston C.I., York Humber High School)

#### WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8 - Rockcliffe Middle School

400 Rockcliffe Boulevard

(Cordella, Dennis Ave., George Syme, Harwood, Rockcliffe Middle, Frank Oke Secondary and Roseland School)

#### Arlington Middle School 501 Arlington Avenue

(Cedarvale, J.R. Wilcox, Arlington, Vaughan Road C.I., Humewood, Rawlinson School)

#### THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23 - Fairbank Middle School

2335 Dufferin Street

(Briar Hill, D.B. Hood, F.H. Miller, Fairbank Memorial, Fairbank Middle, Adult Day School)

#### Kane Middle School 300 Kane Avenue

(C.E. Webster, Keelesdale, Silverthorn, Kane Middle, George Harvey C.I., York Memorial C.I.)

INTERPRETERS & BABYSITTERS AVAILABLE. For further information, call 394-2124.

**EVERYONE WELCOME!!** 

School boards with large populations whose first language is not English in their jurisdictions may wish to prepare multilingual announcements.

#### From the Board of Education for the City of York

#### HOI ĐÔNG NHÁ TRƯỜNG THÔNG BÁO VỀ CÁC BUỔI HOP 7:30 - 9:30 giờ tối

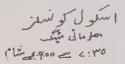
Bổ Giáo Dục và Huấn Luyện đổi hồi các thành viên của Hội Đồng Nhà Trường gồm có: phụ huynh, hiệu trường, giáo viên, đại diện nhân viên yêm trở, đại diện công đồng và học sinh (cấp trung học). Mỗi quí vi đến chia xẽ ý kiến với Uỷ Ban Chi Đạo về việc thành lập tân Hội Đồng Nhà Trưởng của chúng tạ.

#### COMISSÕES ESCOLARES

INFORMAÇÕES DE REUNIÕES 7:30 - 9:00 P.M.

O Ministério de Educação e Treino requer que os membros das Comissões Escolares incluam: pais, principais, professores, representantes do pessoal de apoio, alunos e representantes das comunidades (apenas a nível de escolas secundárias).

Venham e compartilhem as vossas opiniões com a Comissão Organizadora do estabelecimento das nossas novas Comissões Escolares.



لغیلی او د مز بیش مندوی کے دے فردری ہے کہ اسکول کونسز کی ممیر مثنی والدین میر منبز - استاد - کا منا مثندہ اور طالب علم (عرف بائی اسکول کے) بر صفت علو ھو - کا منا مثندہ اور طالب علم (عرف بائی اسکول کے) بر صفت ہو ہو - آ مئی جو اسکول کو نسز کے البقا دی گیا ہے کے ساتھ کی کیے ہے -

#### ASAMBLEAS ESCOLARES INFORMACION SOBRE LAS REUNIONES 7:30 - 9:00 P.M.

El Ministerio de Educación y Entrenamiento requiere que cada Asamblea Escolar esté integrada por padres, el principal (director de la escuela), profesores, representante del personal asistente, representantes de la comunidad y estudiantes (a nivel de Secundaria solamente).

Acérquese y comparta sus opiniones acerca del establecimiento de nuestras nuevas Asambleas Escolares junto al Comité de Iniciativas.

#### TALIYEYAASHA DUGSIGA WARGALINTA KULANADA 7:30-9:00 HABEENIMO

Wasaarada waxbarashada iyo tababarku waxay u baahantahay in ka mid ahaasaha guddiga talada dugsiga ay ku jiraan: Waalidiin, Maamule, Barre, iyo qof masila shaqaalaha, masilayaasha bulshada iyo ardey (heerka dugsi sare oo qura). Kaalay oo la wadaag fikradahaaga guddiga hogaaminta si ay u aasaasaan taliyayaasha cusub ee dugsiga.



# GETTING STARTED

	LEGENO D.B.E - Dunham Board of	Education, MET	— Ministry	of Education	& Training.	5.C.C.—	School Com	numty Counc	il.
	SCHOOL TASKS	RESOURCE	MAY - JUNE '95	SEPT OCT. '95	NOV DEC. '95	JAN FEB. '96	MAR APR. '96	MAY -	STATU
A	Update school staff on S.C.C. developments (e.g. staff meetings)		4					<b>→</b>	
W	Inform parents/community on S.C.C. developments (e.g. newsletters, public forums/information evenings)		<b>←</b>					<b></b>	
R	Include an Invitation to participate on S.C.C. in the School Profile		<b>←</b>						
NE	Ensure school representation at P.D. sessions on S.C.C. (e.g. Principals' Inservice "Getting Started")	D.B.E.	4						
S	Review Durham Policy and Regula- tions on S.C.C.	D.B.E.	Φ—						
	Distribute Durham brochure on S.C.C.	D.B.E.							
	Distribute "Parents' and Students' Rights and Responsibilities" document	M.E.T.	<b></b>						
	Announce new Superintendent of	D.B.E.	4						
	Community Services & role to provide system co-ordination of S.C.C.	5.5.2.					ì		
N	Review the "Durham Framework for Initial Election Procedures for S.C.C."	D.B.E.		<→					
T 1 A T	Set up an ad hoc committee to assist the principal to plan, organize and supervise S.C.C. elections. This committee will be representative of groups who may serve on S.C.C. Attach an action plan for set-up of S.C.C. to principal's management plan	S.P.		<b>←</b>		<b></b> →			
0 N	Refer to School Council Handbook for assistance     Communicate S.C.C. nomination and election process to school community	M.E.T./D.B.E.		4	4				
	Supervise S.C.C. elections	<u> </u>			4		<u> </u>		
M	Announce results of S.C.C. elections				4				
P	Call first meeting of S.C.C. and set agenda					4	<b></b>		
E	Announce Chair of S.C.C. and community representatives selected					4			
M E	Distribute orientation package to S.C.C. members	D.B.E.				4	<b></b>		
N	Submit S.C.C. Information Form to Superintendent of Community Services	D.B.E.				-			
T	Review S.C.C. budget with Chair of S.C.C.					4	-		
A T	Co-ordinate inservice for S.C.C. members	D.B.E./S.C.C.				4		•	
	Establish a three month plan of action for S.C.C.	s.c.c.				4			
0 N	Participate in Provincial School	M.E.T.					-		

Appendix 7

#### Master Worksheets and Other Materials

This appendix includes master worksheets for the activities for getting started at the school level, suggested on pages 14 to 22, and the article "Reasons for Involving Parents", used in Activity 4.

#### **Meaningful Parental Involvement**

Torres.	Definition	Examples
Type Parenting	Helping all families establish home environments to support children as students.	<ul> <li>suggestions for home conditions that support learning at each grade level</li> <li>workshops, videotapes, computerized phone messages on parenting and child-rearing at each age and grade level</li> <li>parent education and other courses or training for parents (e.g., GED, college credit, family literacy)</li> <li>family support programs to assist families with health and nutrition, and other services</li> <li>home visits at transition points to pre-school, elementary, middle, and high school; neighbourhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools understand families</li> </ul>
Communicating	Designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.	<ul> <li>conferences with every parent at least once a year, with follow-ups as needed</li> <li>language translators to assist families as needed</li> <li>weekly or monthly folders of student work sent home for review and comments</li> <li>parent/student pickup of report card, with conferences on improving grades</li> <li>regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters, and other communications</li> <li>clear information on choosing schools or courses, programs, and activities within schools</li> <li>clear information on all school policies, programs, reforms, and transitions</li> </ul>
Volunteering	Recruiting and organizing parent help and support.	<ul> <li>school and classroom volunteer program to help teachers, administrators, students, and other parents</li> <li>parent room or family centre for volunteer work, meetings, resources for families</li> <li>annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times, and locations of volunteers</li> <li>class parent, telephone tree, or other structures to provide all families with needed information</li> <li>parent patrols or other activities to aid safety and operation of school programs</li> </ul>

#### Meaningful Parental Involvement (cont.)

Туре	Definition	Examples
Learning at home	Providing information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.	<ul> <li>information for families on skills required for students in all subjects at each grade</li> <li>information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home</li> <li>information on how to assist students to improve skills on various class and school assessments</li> <li>regular schedule of homework that requires students to discuss and interact with families on what they are learning in class</li> <li>calendars with activities for parents and students at home</li> <li>family math, science, and reading activities at school</li> <li>summer learning packets or activities</li> <li>family participation in setting student goals each year and in planning for college or work</li> </ul>
Decision-making	Including parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.	<ul> <li>active PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, advisory councils, or committees (e.g., curriculum, safety, personnel) for parent leadership and participation</li> <li>independent advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform and improvements</li> <li>district-level councils and committees for family and community involvement</li> </ul>
Collaborating with the community	Identifying and integrating resources and service from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.	<ul> <li>information on school or local elections for school representatives</li> <li>networks to link all families with parent representatives</li> <li>information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs or services</li> <li>information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students</li> <li>service integration through partnerships involving school: civic, counselling, cultural, health, recreation, and other agencies and organizations; and businesses</li> <li>service to the community by students, families, and schools (e.g., recycling, art, music, drama, and other activities for seniors or others)</li> <li>participation of alumni in school programs for students</li> </ul>

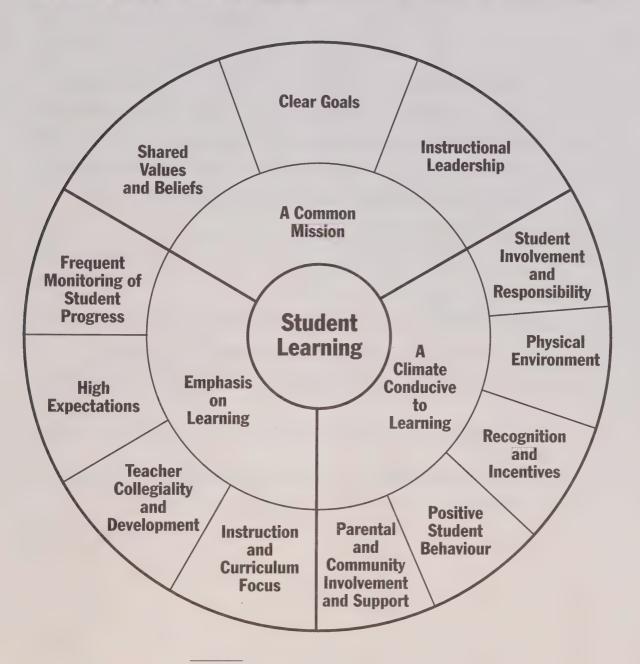
Source: Joyce Epstein. "School/Family/Community Partnerships, Caring for the Children We Share", Phi Delta Kappan, May 1995.

	Deck		
	Learning at Home		
	Volunteering		
ement	Communicating		
Celebrating Involvement	Parenting		
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Collaborating with the Community

ision-Making

# **Characteristics of Effective Schools**



Source: Effective Schools Task Force, Halton Board of Education

# School Councils – Partners for Learning

"The evidence is clear that parental encouragement activities and interest at home and parental participation in schools and classrooms positively influence achievement, even after the student's ability and family socio-economic status are taken into account."

Epstein, 1985

"Studies of parental involvement programs overwhelmingly confirm a positive relationship between such programs and children's schooling." Ziegler, 1987

"When parents are involved, children do better in schools, and they go to better schools."

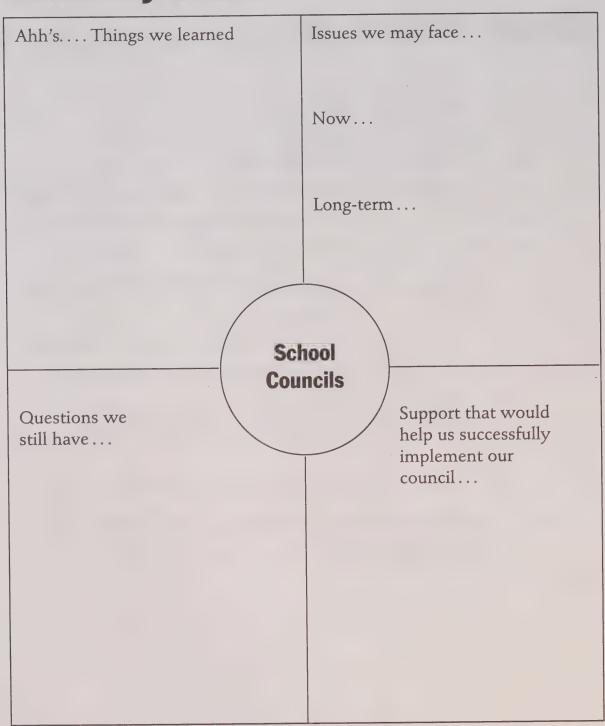
Swap, 1993

GETTING STARTED . MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAININ

# Policy Memorandum 122 Jigsaw Activity #1

- 1. Read and highlight
  - Person A Background
  - Person B Development of School Board Policies to end of Membership (top of page 3)
  - Person C Roles and Responsibilities of School Councils to end of Roles and Responsibilities of School Council Members
  - Person D The School Board and the School Councils to conclusion
- 2. Teach your section to the group
- 3. Complete as a team the worksheet in your package

## **Summary Sheet**



# **Carousel Brainstorming**

For this exercise, divide into groups of five or six; each group works separately.

- 1. Stand in front of a sheet of chart paper.
- 2. Choose a recorder.
- 3. Brainstorm responses to the posted question quickly.
- 4. After two minutes, at the signal, move one sheet to your right.
- 5. Brainstorm quickly at the new sheet (two minutes).
- 6. At the signal, move to the right and repeat the process.
- 7. When you reach the last question, go back to question #1 and repeat at each sheet of paper until you have brainstormed responses to all the questions.

Then see the synergy you have produced!

## Meaningful Parental Involvement Jigsaw Activity #2

1. Read and highlight the assigned section of "Reasons for Involving Parents", by Peter Ross

Person A page 1+2

Person B page 3, 4 + top of page 5

Person C page 5 middle (#6) to conclusion

- 2. Teach your group the information
- 3 Summarize key points on chart paper

GETTING STARTED . MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAININ

# **Advantages of an Advisory Body**

### An advisory body can

- solve problems
- create opportunities
- encourage grassroots "meaningful" involvement
- be an ambassador for the school and education
- promote teamwork

7. MASTER WORKSHEETS AND OTHER MATERIALS

- develop a sense of community
   with the school at the centre
- reposition education as a lifelong and wonderful activity

adapted from Patrick Jackson, 1995

#### Reasons for involving parents

Peter N. Ross

Studies of parental involvement programs overwhelmingly confirm a positive relationship between such programs and children's schooling. "The recent acknowledgements of the importance of parent involvement are built on research findings accumulated over two decades that show that children have an advantage in school when their parents encourage and support their school activities" (Ziegler, 1987, p. 6). As a consequence, try-

Studies of parental involvement programs overwhelmingly confirm a positive relationship between such programs and children's schooling.

ing to educate children without the involvement of their family is like trying to play a hockey game with one of the teams barred from the arena. The research literature on parental involvement in schools indicates that such inclusion results in many benefits for children: better long-term academic achievement, higher grades, higher test scores, higher motivation and more positive attitudes, increased commitment to schooling, fewer retentions in grade, decreased placement in special education classes, fewer behavioural problems, improved average daily attendance, fewer school dropouts, lower suspension rates, more successful

programs, and ultimately more effective schools (Henderson, 1988; Swap, 1993; Wikelund, 1990). Not surprisingly, in schools where parental involvement is high teachers find increased job satisfaction and are regarded as more effective.

There are many reasons for involving parents in the school. After reviewing 172 research studies, one team concluded that there are six sound reasons for involving parents:

- 1) parents are responsible for the welfare of their children;
- 2) involved parents provide better political support and advocacy;
- 3) early intervention programs which involve parents are more effective;
- 4) by involving parents, the same outcomes can be achieved at less cost;
- 5) the benefits of early intervention are maintained better if parents are involved;
- 6) parent involvement provides benefits to parents and family members as well as the child (White, Taylor, & Moss, 1989, pp. 8-9).

The Office of Community Education in Massachusetts acknowledges "Parents' involvement in their children's education is basic to the success of their children in school" (1989, p. 1). It then outlines a number of ways that parents make a difference:

- family involvement can dramatically improve the academic achievement of students who were previously failing;
- children whose parents help them with their homework do better than other children of similar family background and academic aptitudes;
- economically disadvantaged high school seniors who in their early years were enrolled in pre-school programs in which there was strong parental involvement consistently outperformed their peers;
- the intergenerational cycle of school failure can be broken when schools succeed in reaching out to, training, and involving the families of at-risk students;
- family support and education programs that enhance parents' involvement in their children's school have a profound effect on children's academic achievement;
- successful outreach requires a partnership between the school and other community agencies that have contact with and address the basic survival needs of non-participating parents (p. 1).

Involving parents directly in the education of their child helps the child immeasurably. For the parent, it provides a sense of commitment to the school program and a feeling of control that he/she is doing something useful to advance the child's educational opportunities (Lareau & Benson, 1984). Furthermore, "Schools and families are more effective organizations when they cooperate in the education of their common charge – the child" (Epstein, 1985, p. 25).

#### **Parent Involement and Achievement**

#### 1. General Results of Research

Considerable research has been conducted into the relationship between parental involvement and pupil achievement. The results are consistently positive: "The evidence is clear that parental encouragement, activities, and interest at home and parental participation in schools and classrooms positively influence achievement, even after the student's ability and family socio-economic status are taken into account" (Epstein, 1985 p. 19). For example, in 1981 an annotated bibliography prepared by the National Committee for Citizens in Education, *The Evidence Grows*, described 35 studies concerning this relationship. It concluded that study after study resulted in positive findings that indicated parent involvement in almost any form produced measurable gains in student achievement (Henderson).

APPENDIX 7. MASTER WORKSHEETS AND OTHER MATERIALS

A more recent 1987 update of this work reviewed 18 new studies and found that involving parents can make a critical difference (Henderson).

Synthesis of 2575 empirical studies of academic learning shows parents directly or indirectly influence the eight chief determinants of cognitive, affective, and behavioural learning (Walberg, 1984). Four of these determinants are essential for classroom learning: the student's ability, motivation,

"The evidence is clear that parental encouragement, activities, and interest at home and parental participation in schools and classrooms positively influence achievement, even after the student's ability and family socio-economic status are taken into account."

the quality of instruction, and the amount of instruction. The other four determinants have a more indirect bearing on education: the psychological climate of the classroom, an academically stimulating home environment, a peer group with academic interests, and a minimum exposure to low-grade television. These factors increase the likelihood that a student will respond positively to instruction and that he/she will have greater motivation for learning. In summary, the participation of parents in the education of their children makes an effective contribution to their learning.

Interestingly, the literature on effective schools indicates that "the average level of achievement does not appear to rise unless parents are involved in the school" (Henderson, 1988, p. 151). Supporting such a conclusion, Ziegler points out, "In a large-scale study of elementary schools and school achievement in Michigan, parental involvement in the school was found

to significantly correlate with average school achievement state-wide" (1987, p. 34). There is an aggregate effect for the school that welcomes such involvement: students benefit with increased learning, parents achieve their goals, and teachers have a greater sense of accomplishment. Fullan (1991) states that parental involvement should be part of the definition of an effective school.

#### 2. Effect of Socio-economic Status

Many programs that encourage parental involvement are intended to overcome the negative effects of class and poverty. Without a doubt, socioeconomic status (SES) affects school success. Besides the greater income that those with higher SES possess, they are more likely to understand the significance of the interdependence between school and home and the importance of their role in achieving gains for their children. Moreover, they tend to employ their understanding to ensure more effective socialization, more participation in out-of-school activities, and greater access to helpful experiences (Lareau & Benson, 1984). That being acknowledged, however, the effect of SES is statistical. Higher SES relates directly to

"In fact, in determining children's school success, researchers have decided that it is what the family does that matters, rather than its SES."

school success for most children, but is not a good predictor for the individual family or child. "In fact, in determining children's school success, researchers have decided that it is what the family does that matters, rather than its SES" (Eastman, 1988, p. 6). As a consequence, schools that encourage involvement for any group of parents will have a beneficial effect. It is likely that the attempt will increase the value parents place on school activities, increase their interest and improve the interactions between parent and child.

#### 3. Conditions for Learning

Parents establish the conditions for learning, for example, an academically stimulating home environment and the encouragement of positive attitudes to education. As Eastman found in a survey of the research literature, "Specific family processes that are related to higher school achievement include holding high educational and occupational aspirations for children, maintaining warm and supportive family relationships, providing firm and consistent discipline, organizing time and space for academic tasks, and reinforcing verbal and thinking skills" (1988, p. 2). Not surprisingly, when children live in a family that creates conditions that foster learning, they earn higher scores on measures of achievement and appear more competent than do those children from families that have not done this (Becher, 1984).

#### 4. Parental Interest in Schoolwork

Supportive parents also manifest a great deal of interest in their children's schoolwork. When parents display a strong interest in what their children do at school, they ensure the acquisition of attitudes that sustain achievement, attitudes that reflect how the family interacts rather than its social class or income (Ziegler, 1987). "A large scale study of high schools found that the degree of parental interest was correlated with math achievement and college plans and concluded that it was the 'critical factor' in explaining the impact of the high school environment on the achievement and educational aspirations of students" (Eastman, 1988, p. 8). When students are assured concerning the attitudes they hold about themselves and their sense of control over the environment, they appear to achieve better results. These attitudes – largely formed *at home* – mirror the interest shown by parents (Henderson, 1988).

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#### 5. Parental Behaviours

This interest is often revealed in behaviours that affect learning. Typical parental behaviours that are significantly related to the development of competence and achievement in children when high achievers are compared to those who perform less successfully in school are as follows:

- parents have more interactions that are responsive to the child's questions and learning needs;
- parents view themselves as teachers and engage in effective strategies to help the child;
- they use more advanced levels and styles of thought and language in their interactions with the child, for example, providing more detailed instructions, more verbal variety, and more explanations or reasons when giving feedback;
- parents also act as better models of learning and achievement;
- they provide considerably more reinforcement for school behaviour (Becher, 1984).

#### 6. Home and School Values

Coleman found that "the continuity of values between home and school reinforces a child's educational experience" (Henderson, 1988, p. 152).

"When parents are involved children do better in school, and they go to better schools." This continuity underscores the reasons for involving parents, as noted above. When family and school work together harmoniously to complement one another, the combination greatly assists the child in advancing his/her learning (Fullan, 1991). In addition, when the parent is prepared to become fully involved, the effect on the child is even more powerful. Commenting on the research literature, Fullan writes, "Yet emerging from this research is a message that is remarkable in its consistency: the closer the parent is to the education of the child, the greater the impact on child development and educational achieve-

ment" (1991, p. 227). Ziegler, who conducted a survey in Toronto, concurs with this: "We found that many of the parents of the most successful students in the schools were in frequent contact with their child's teacher, while this was less likely to be true of families whose children were doing poorly" (1987, p. 54).

#### 7. Homework

Homework is a particular case of home and school cooperation. Studies of its effects indicate that this practice produces high academic achievement. "New findings reveal that homework improves achievement, when achievement is measured by standardized tests or by course grades" (Strother, 1984, p. 424). Strother referred to a study that found the extra time-on-task represented by homework yielded higher achievement, as measured by grades, for all levels of ability. It also seemed to compensate for students with learning deficits. Those with lower ability were able to achieve grades not unlike those achieved by their brighter peers through additional study. The advantages of homework are not just increased time studying, but also increased self-discipline and better work habits. In highperforming schools, teachers expect students to do homework. Research suggests that the best results from homework arise when it is well planned and evaluated by teachers since their feedback and comments boost student achievement (Walberg, 1984). When parents support homework policies, perhaps being an audience for a child's work, a home tutor, or a colearner and when teachers insist on homework and mark it, the child's academic achievement correspondingly improves.

#### 8. Summary

In a survey of the effects of parental involvement, Swap concludes that there can be no doubt: "parent involvement improves student achievement. When parents are involved children do better in school, and they go to better schools" (quoted, 1993, p. 3). The literature does not support one best way to involve parents; however, the features which dominate are the intensity of contacts between parent and teacher and a plan that is carefully formed, comprehensive, and aimed at the long term. The highest gains appear in the younger grades when parents are home tutors, but there are also some gains when they are involved as supporters and reinforcers of the child's learning.

Why does parent involvement work? "When the child sees her parent visit the class, talk to the teacher, or receive a personal note from the teacher which is read to the child, the likelihood increases that the child will feel that her two worlds overlap and that she is at home in both" (Ziegler, 1984, p. 43). The worlds of family and school need to overlap and become interdependent. Parents assist their children when they move into the school's territory and encourage intellectual development; schools assist the students when they acquire some of the characteristics of a good home and treat each child as a unique individual.

Source: Peter N. Ross, York University, 1994 (working paper).

# School Council/ Current Parent Group Comparison

Area	Ministry of Education and Training Policy 122				
Role	advisory to school and board				
Membership  • parents  • teachers  • other staff  • community  • students  • principal  • others	<ul> <li>to be the majority</li> <li>elected</li> <li>elected</li> <li>appointed</li> <li>appointed (elected at secondary, optional at elementary)</li> <li>appointed</li> <li>may be included</li> </ul>				
Term of Office	<ul> <li>one or two years</li> <li>elected and appointed members may seek</li> <li>additional terms</li> </ul>				
Chair	parent elected by council				
Meetings	<ul> <li>must meet four times per year</li> <li>establish goals, priorities</li> </ul>				
Procedures	developed by the board				
Implementation	<ul> <li>principal responsible</li> <li>parent involvement in board policy development encouraged</li> </ul>				
Evaluation	board to develop procedures				

Ministry of Education and Training Policy 122

**Current Practices** 

#### Activities

advice on:

- local school year calendar
- school code of student behaviour
- curriculum and program goals and priorities
- the responses of the school or school board to achievement in provincial and board assessment programs
- preparation of the school profile
- selection of principals
- school budget priorities, including local capital improvement plans
- school community communications strategies
- methods of reporting to parents and the community
- extracurricular activities in the school
- school-based services and community partnerships related to social, health, recreational, and nutritional programs
- community use of school facilities
- local co-ordination of services for children and youth
- development, implementation, and review of board policies at the local level

# **Questions for Current Parent Groups**

- 1. Would our members be interested in the roles and responsibilities of a school council?
- 2. What changes would we need to make to form a school council?
- 3. Would the school council be able to continue in our current areas of involvement?
- 4. What would be the benefits for our students?

GETTING STARTED . MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

# A Summary of Characteristics of Effective Councils

#### **Regarding Students**

- Remain student-centred with high expectations for all students.
- Share a collective vision encompassing the goals and dreams of parents, staff, administration, community members, and students.
- Recognize and support student achievement and improvement at every council meeting.

#### **Regarding Principals, Teachers, and Staff**

- Support the commitment of dedicated teachers.
- Enlist the co-operation and involvement of teachers to enhance the educational agenda of meetings.
- Encourage active, honest staff involvement.
- Recognize the principal as one of the school's educational leaders and manager of the day-to-day operations.

#### **Regarding Parents and Community**

- Enlist parent and community involvement.
- Explore and utilize community resources.
- Encourage participation by businesses and social agencies.

#### **Regarding Council Members**

- Maintain respect for the opinions, concerns, interests, and ideas of others.
- Keep an open mind encourage continued communication.
- Make a commitment of time and talent. School development and improvement are everyone's responsibility.
- Foster a co-operative climate.
- Be informed seek training and development for the council.

Source: Adapted from *The Link – A Quick Reference for Local School Councils*, Chicago: Chicago Public Schools, Office of Reform, 1995.

APPENDIX 7. MASTER WORKSHEETS AND OTHER MATERIALS

# Planning Framework for the New School Council – A 100-day plan

Timeline			
Persons Responsible			
Strategies			
Communication  • informing the community about school councils • elections	Outreach  • preparing to appoint community representatives	Training  • support required	The First Meeting  • environment • agenda

## **Communication Strategies**

#### **Reaching Out to Your Community**

- school and community newsletters
- telephone network
- banner or sign at the front of the school
- cable television
- notices in community and religious centres/local businesses
- local newspapers
- ratepayers' newspapers
- parent/staff/student ambassadors visiting neighbourhood homes
- local shopping mall displays
- special events at the school
- local community group and service agency meetings
- breakfast "stand up" meeting
- morning or evening coffee
- personal letters and invitations
- "Community Hall of Fame" a mural, created by students through interviews, representing your school community, followed by a recognition ceremony

#### **Outreach Strategies - Reflecting the Diversity of the Community**

The following outreach strategies are taken from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation publication entitled *Education Forum: Antiracism Education – Getting Started* (1995).

- facilitate the use of school space during and after school hours
- advertise continually in several languages, in an easily understandable style the availability of school space in school board, mainstream, and ethno-specific community publications
- send out materials such as colourful flyers with large print to advertise school events
- use ethno-specific radio and television programs, local cable stations, school- or board-made videos, the telephone, and other non-print media to supplement the written information you send out
- use voice mail or an answering machine to announce events at school or trips that students will be taking, or even required homework projects that are due (this can be done in several languages)
- make follow-up telephone calls the day and night before school events to remind and further encourage parents to attend
- make sure that external school doors are open when the building is in use
- ensure that support staff know that members of the community will be using the school

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- ensure that your body language (i.e. your gestures, facial expression, and tone and volume of voice) transmits messages of welcoming, warmth, and friendliness for the parents/guardians of your students
- demystify the teacher jargon: explain what terms mean, and give parents the language of the classroom
- arrange meetings at times when parents can attend. (This may mean times that are different from those regularly scheduled by your school.)
   Ask your students to help you find out about this
- schedule meetings/interviews with parents so that those whose first language is not English or those who speak a different variety of English have time to convey their meaning to you and you to them
- plan meetings with parents on days that are not religious or other significant holy days or holidays for them, and are not days when other community events are taking place
- while some parents may need language and/or cultural interpreters to help them have meaningful conversations with teachers, others may need an advocate to attend meetings with them for moral/psychological support. Encourage parents to bring an advocate with them
- make sure that school personnel do not outnumber parents in parentteacher conferences
- provide child care at parent interview times
- contact parents about their child(ren)'s successes in school as well as their failures
- create a one-page newsletter with abbreviated school news for parents in their own language
- designate a staff member or administrator to work with ethno-specific voluntary or faith organizations
- frequent communication with these groups will enable schools to reach the uninvolved parent through a "mediator". Faith or other community leaders and elders could stress the importance of parental involvement with their children's school
- involve parents who are affiliated with other community organizations; they are good resources for bringing in other parents
- provide free child care for parent volunteers with young children
- provide training for all school volunteers
- arrange workshops that focus on community issues for staff so that they
  become better acquainted with the community in which they teach. For
  example, in First Nations areas, community leaders could be invited to
  the school to do workshops and staff could arrange to go into the community for professional activity days. Some of the workshops could
  focus on communication styles, learning styles, parental expectations,
  and so on





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